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THE INFLUENCE OF HISTORY
ON INDIVIDUAL AND NATIONAL ACTION.

BY PAUL A. CHADBOURNE, M. D.,
PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN.



THE INFLUENCE OF HISTORY

ON INDIVIDUAL AND NATIONAL ACTION.

ANNUAL ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OF WISCONSIN,

THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 30th, 1868.

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PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN.

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THE INFLUENCE OF HISTORY

ON INDIVIDUAL AND NATIONAL ACTION.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN:

The living present is the time for action; but the actions of men are often prompted by the remembrance of the past and controlled by considerations of the future. Consider for a moment those acts that make history; that will remain like mountains of granite, when ordinary actions are swept on to oblivion, as the fine dust of the earth is borne on by the rapid streams, to be buried in the bottom of the ocean. What mighty influences combined to call such actions forth; to give them power and shape, until they took their place in the history of the world, dividing it into epochs and giving it character as Alpine chains and solitary mountains give variety and grandeur to the surface of the globe.

A hero may suddenly astonish the world with the daring and brilliancy of his achievements. His name, unknown before, is cut in imperishable letters in the great monument of history, and men wonder at the good fortune or the sudden outburst of genius that gave him the place; little knowing perchance of the influences that have been long preparing him for the work, nor of the gathering forces growing deeper and stronger within him, until the occasion like an electric spark called them into action.

A nation awakes us with a sudden impulse, to an energy of physical and moral power which takes the world by surprise,

because the world has failed to comprehend the influences that molding the national heart and will prepared it for that long unyielding struggle, that in the end was crowned with victory.

In the history of individuals or of nations, great acts do not come at random, as solitary meteors shoot from the sky; nor do great men become great at the moment they appear so to the world, as wonders of magic spring up in Arabian tales at the touch of some enchanter's wand.

Every act worth living in history is the result of influences and moral forces that converge to it like the unseen chains of gravitation, that stretching from star to star and from sun to planet, keep the balance of those mighty orbs in their revolutions, and bring them in due time to their appointed place in the heavens.

Among the potent influences molding the characters of men and nations—impelling them to noble acts and fitting them to endure, is history—history giving examples of the great, the good and the heroic for emulation, and recording the present for the praise or censure of generations to come. History thus, in what it teaches of the past, and in what it promises or threatens for the future concentrates its influences on men and nations, to call out deeds worthy to live in history. As man is by nature a lover of the beautiful and noble in action, the influence for good, for what is high and worthy of man, cannot fail to be stronger than the influence for evil, from the study of the past. And as it is natural for men to desire to live in honored remembrance when they are gone, the pen of history will be mightier than the sword in restraining the ambitious and unprincipled from wrong. We need only recall the great achievements of men and nations to see that the contemplation of the past and the hope for the applause of future generations, nerved them to action. When the orator would arouse men to brave and worthy effort, he reminds them of the heroic deeds of men of other days, whose memory lives in story or in song; or he calls up to their imagination future

generations judging and applauding their achievements. His art of eloquence would fail to paint the damning stain of treason, without the picture of an Arnold drawn from life; his loftiest conceptions would fail to give the pure, unselfish patriot, which the name of Washington presents for our admiration. What appeals to patriotism and love of country from the bugle tones of an Everett or a Choate could so touch the people's heart with fire, as the name of that old man of iron will, whose patriotism deepened and strengthened in conflict with savage tribes and foreign foes, raised him above all party ties, and called forth those words ever to be remembered as the watch-word of our nation—"THE FEDERAL UNION—IT MUST AND SHALL BE PRESERVED!" He, who would tear one State from its place, must wait till the brazen statue of ANDREW JACKSON has crumbled to dust and his words are blotted out from the memory of the American people. Every noble word which history has left on record, every monumental pile, every picture, bust or relic, that recalls the old worthies, fires the heart with purer and more fervent love for our country and binds together more firmly the members of this Union.

The poet has indeed, in polished numbers, asked the question :

" Can storied urn or animated bust,
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath ?
Can honor's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or flattery soothe the dull cold ear of death ?"

We give the answer which his question seems to challenge. We answer, No. Nor do we consider it a misfortune that the heroic dead no longer hear the plaudits of an admiring, grateful people. Their honors are not worthless because they cannot bring the dead from the tomb, give speculation to the eye, hearing to the ear, music to the tongue, and activity to the limbs. That "storied urn and animated bust" can do more than recall one mortal from the grave. They can nerve a thousand strong hands that, but for them, might have been power-

less for good. They may fire a thousand hearts with high and holy aspirations, and make a thousand men what they had never been without the remembrance of the deeds which the chiseled marble and glowing canvas keep ever proclaiming to the world. We build monuments for the dead—they speak alone to the living. As they look upon the marble and canvas, they desire to imitate the great and good whose virtues are thus communicated; they desire, like them, to live in the grateful remembrance of generations yet to come. It is no weak, ignoble desire, but one implanted by God in every human breast for the progress of the race in all that is most worthy of man. He cannot be true to his nature and at the same time be influenced like an animal, only by what is now passing in the world or what his instincts may suggest of the future, without any reference to the past. The more he becomes a man, the more he feels himself indebted to the past for warning and encouragement in the lives and deaths of those whose earthly mission is finished, and whose acts can now be calmly viewed, with no party hate or selfish interest to distrust the judgment: and the more, also, does he feel his thoughts and affections reaching forth to coming generations, and the desire ever gaining new strength of being remembered and honored when he is gone. The higher he rises, the broader his horizon taking in the past and future.

When the patriots of the revolution were discussing the great question of national independence, it was not only the remembrance of their wrongs but of the wrongs of their fathers that moved them to action. Nor was it the wrongs of our nation alone that fired their hearts. Taxation without representation, though the tax were but a single penny, was the occasion of arousing in them the remembrance of tyranny and oppression in all ages of the world. The hatefulness of tyranny and the blessings of liberty were painted before them on the canvas of past history, every figure brought into living light by their own immediate wrongs. When they hurled de-

fiance at George the Third, before whose throne they had so lately bowed as humble petitioners, it was not against him alone that they rebelled. They saw represented in him every tyrant whose name and cruel deeds had been handed down to them in history. And when the time came for them to strike, they struck to avenge the wrongs of man in all ages. They recalled the names of every tyrant to quicken and deepen their hatred of wrong. They recounted every example of the brave and free to arouse themselves to noble deeds. They struck not for themselves, for they went down joyfully to death, as did Warren on the first great battle-field when the strife of years had just begun. They struck for the rights and the applause of coming generations. Death comes a welcome guest

“—to the hero when his sword
Has won the battle for the free,
[His] voice sounds like a prophet's word,
And in its hollow tones are heard
The thanks of millions yet to be.”

The actions of men are often better than their philosophy, and their higher instincts brush away like chaff the boasted practical wisdom with which they surround themselves, in so much pride. While fancying that they are walking securely within its enclosure, safe from the weaknesses of less practical men, let but the opportunity be presented and they are off in a moment into the foolish pursuits of Historians and Antiquarians. They do it before they have time to think, because it is natural they should do so. Many a man, who, theoretically, has defended a low and niggardly course of conduct, has by the promptings of his better nature, thrown his narrow and ignoble theories to the winds, and shown himself a man. No influence is more powerful to call out the best instincts of our nature and give them the mastery over all that is low and sordid than historic associations, by which we are made companions of the noble dead—of those who having passed beyond the sphere of envy, hate and slander yet live in the records of their words and deeds.

Of what use to the world is Bunker Hill Monument? It is a mere shaft of granite. It shows no light to guide ships upon the ocean, no busy hum of trade is heard within its walls. It took years of labor to rend its heavy blocks from the quarry and lift them to their place in the lofty pyramid. It cost money by the thousands and no dividends have ever been declared. The money and labor are both a waste, utterly thrown away, as values are quoted on the exchange. The wisdom of trade cries aloud against such an investment. But where is the American—I do not say New Englander—but where is the American, worthy of the name, who would take one block of granite from that shaft, or would, if he could by a single word, change it to a mart of trade? He would rather say, with WEBSTER :

“We trust * * that rising in massive solidity and unadorned grandeur, it may remain as long as Heaven permits the works of man to last, a fit emblem, both of the events in memory of which it is raised and of the gratitude of those who reared it. * * We wish that whoever in all coming time shall turn his eye hither, may behold that the place is not undistinguished where the first great battle of the revolution was fought. We wish that this structure may proclaim the magnitude and importance of that event to every class and every eye. We wish that infancy may learn the purpose of its erection from maternal lips, and that weary and withered age may behold it and be solaced by the recollections which it suggests. We wish that labor may look up here and be proud in the midst of its toil. We wish that in those days of disaster, which, as they come upon all nations, must be expected to come upon us also, desponding patriotism may turn its eyes hitherward and be assured that the foundations of our national power still stand strong. We wish that this column, rising toward heaven among the pointed spires of so many temples dedicated to God, may contribute also to produce, in all minds, a pious feeling of dependence and gratitude. We wish, finally, that the last object in the sight of him who leaves his native shore, and the first to gladden him who revisits it, may be something which shall remind him of the liberty and glory of his country. Let it rise till it meet the sun in his coming; let the earliest light of the morning gild it, and parting day linger and play on its summit.”

Thus spoke the great orator, the statesman and philosopher, of the power of a single shaft of granite.

As it rises over the land and over the sea, it speaks to every beholder of heroic struggles, of martyrs to the cause of liberty; and to every American of the first, stern conflict, when his own country fought her way to freedom and to an independent po-

sition among the nations of the world. He glories in the past and glories in his connection with the deeds thus commemorated—deeds that had passed into history before he was born. His heart expands with generous emotions at the remembrance of those who died for the right, and he becomes not only a more loyal American, but a nobler and happier man. The names of Lexington and Concord, and Saratoga and Yorktown, will not only remain in history forever, but they will remain a priceless boon to the whole American people, and to the cause of liberty in the whole world. We care nothing for their statistics of trade and commerce; we do not ask whether their population is numbered by the hundred or by thousands. Their soil may be barren sand or fertile as the garden of Eden. These are matters of interest to the few who live within their limits, but as for us, we neither know nor care to know of all these. They can, at best, make but little difference in the wealth and population of the world, or of our nation. But the historic records of the struggles for liberty which these names recall cause the heart of every American to throb with pride, and will nerve the patriot's hand to strike, when his liberties are endangered.

Our land has been rent with civil strife and our noblest brothers and sons sleep on the battle-field. There are reasons why we would gladly forget that struggle and let its records pass into oblivion, as we wish the hatred of the strife to be forgotten in the blessings of a perfect and perpetual union. Why then rear those monuments to the known and unknown dead? Why shall a sacred field at Antietam and Gettysburg be wrested from the plough and given to silent, unchanging marble? Because the voice of nature demands it. While we hasten to forget all rancor, while we hasten to so restore the Union that both North and South shall forget that they have ever met as antagonists in war, neither can we as a nation, nor can the world allow the heroic dead to be forgotten. Their monuments must rise, to show how a free people can suffer,

endure and die for their love of country. While those monuments stand, the world will know that loyalty does not need the trappings of a throne, around which to center. While they stand, the world will know that no form of government can better protect itself than a Republic; and while those monuments stand and are cherished by the American people, no nation in the world will attack them willingly. There is not a power in the old world, that cannot see those monuments, though half the convex earth lies between, and read upon their smoothest surface the record of that gigantic power which they must meet, if they would wrest a single right from the humblest American citizen.

When the bitterness and sorrow of civil strife shall be happily forgotten—when the old love for the Union shall be rekindled in every American heart—then coming generations, in north and south, will join in celebrating the honors and in emulating the valor of those who died for the salvation of their country. While the world stands it will be better for every battle of freedom fought on American soil. Those born in foreign lands, who never step upon our shores, will be cheered and guided by our example, when their rights and liberties are endangered. Every record, every monument, every relic that proclaims what a free people has done, is a herald proclaiming the rights of man and the possibility of liberty to every beholder. The war worn flags, torn with shot and shell, begrimed with the smoke of battle, are not only dear to the soldiers who followed them into the conflict, but when the last veteran is gone,—when the acts of the present decade shall have so far receded that not one shall be left to tell the story of our times, these flags will repeat their lesson of warning and encouragement to every generation, till their colors fade and their very tissues are changed to dust.

It is thus that every monument that commemorates a noble life or a single heroic deed, becomes a blessing to the world. Every painting, every medal, every token that recalls more

vividly the man or act, does its part in moulding men for like high and noble purposes. The very soil, where worthy acts have been performed, gives a higher life to those who tread upon it. It is the instinctive recognition of this truth that leads men to build monuments and gather mementos. They care not how insignificant the relic, if it recall more vividly the worthy character or glorious act. This feeling enters largely into that natural curiosity, implanted in us for a wise purpose—for our improvement—that leads us to travel, that we may look upon scenes where men have acted or endured. What is Thermopylæ more than another mountain pass? What is Waterloo better than a hundred other undulating fields? The ignorant boor might pass them both without a single thought, and the wisest would see nothing to arrest his attention, if ignorant of their story. But to the student of history they are enchanted ground. What had been dim and shadowy glows with life and the sound of rushing squadrons, of the vanquished and the victors, strikes upon his ear as though the forces were marshalled and the conflict now raging. In no other place can that impression be made—and when he leaves either spot, he leaves it never to be the man he was before. Impressions are deepened, and though he may never be called upon to defend a mountain pass, or to take his place in a Waterloo struggle, yet the quickened thought and love of heroic deeds will give a higher tone to every action of his life, and may in some unknown way be the turning point in changing his own destiny and that of thousands connected with him. Not a year, not a month, not a day passes that some man does not take a new stand, bid defiance to some danger and strike out a new line of life for himself and change the fate of others, because he is guided by the example and impelled by the influence of those who have gone before him. His path may be a new one, but it is the light of the past that shines upon his way and makes his footsteps sure.

And nations move like men. They appeal to their traditions—to the example of their founders, to their fields of victory or honorable defeat—to the flag that bears in its folds their proudest historic records. For what other flag could the American patriot so bravely face death as for the stars and stripes?

But what can such a Society as yours accomplish for individual or national good?

In looking over your first publication I find the following objects among those desired for the collection of the Society:

“Old letters and journals relative to the early history and settlement of Wisconsin. Facts illustrative of our Indian tribes, with contributions of Indian implements, dress, ornaments and curiosities.”

“Drawings and description of our ancient mounds and fortifications; their size, representation and locality. Information respecting any ancient coin or other curiosity found in Wisconsin. Old magazines and pamphlets, autographs of distinguished persons, coins, medals, &c.”

And then it is said, that

“The curious and mythic history [of the red man], so far as we can snatch its fragments from the rapidly receding past, should be gathered with pious care.”

What a strange paper this is to be sent out by the men of Wisconsin! I have looked it through with care, and I cannot find that it tells how to raise more wheat, how to open a lead mine or to smelt its ores. It does not mention the word money unless that ancient and almost obsolete word “coin” has some reference to it.

Is it then true that, here in the great and growing, busy West, where the practical Yankee has become more practical, a Society is found gathering old books and papers, hoarding up old letters, and hurrying to measure old mounds before the plough destroys their outlines? True it is, and stranger still, one portion of this stately building is set aside for the accumulation of this old rubbish. Money is voted by the State to aid in the work, and we are here to-night to celebrate the anni-

versary of the Society. And no better time can be found for calling the Society to an account before a jury of twelve practical men, if so many can be found here to-night.

Your Society has not for its object to give us either more bread and meat, or better raiment and shelter. Shall not some practical finger write upon the plastering of the wall, "Thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting?"

What good are you to do the world by seeking for what is well nigh forgotten? Why have you formed a Society to gather black-letter volumes and the traditions of Indian tribes that will soon disappear from the earth, having left no system of philosophy and no science to instruct the world, and having performed no acts worthy of emulation?

Let me attempt an answer, by showing that other men and other nations are engaged in similar work—that you have at least high examples to which you can appeal. And then we will trace, if we can, that broad principle of human nature that thus links all civilized men together in this common work for the good of the world.

I may be allowed to use my own words which have long since passed into print:

"On the banks of the Tigris there is the palace of a king who has no successor among living monarchs, and whose subjects have long since ceased to be reckoned among the powers of the world. For more than two thousand years earth and rubbish have covered its ruined walls. * * But this burying place of former grandeur and of the passing generations has not been left undisturbed. From their resting place have been brought up the slabs that, in a measure, reveal the thoughts of this ancient people. * * Why are those huge blocks of stone sawn asunder, floated down the Tigris and then borne across the ocean to take their places in our own museums? * * Why do scholars bend with wearied eye and throbbing brain over these old mutilated inscriptions? Do they expect to find in them lessons of wisdom, which they have never read in other languages? or to make, by such labors, discoveries in art and science which shall lengthen human life, alleviate its ills or add to its comforts? None of these things are expected. The old deities are to us mere stone—brittle slabs of mingled clay and gypsum; their mystic cones meaning less, their carving uncouth, their inscriptions some idle vaunt of vain glorious kings, only equalled by the senseless self-laudations of the 'Brother of the Sun.' But in every line upon those old marbles there is the record of a thought, and, whatever its value or worthlessness, we wish to throw its light upon the great background of human history. * * It is for the same reason that we seek to gather from the mounds of our own country the relics of a lost people. We gather their rude implements; even

the broken pottery is a treasure ; and all this to pierce the curtain of mystery that hangs over their origin and history—to catch a glimpse, if possible, of some broken shaft in that long gallery of history which fell so long before Columbus lived that not a single arch has been borne to us on the bosom of Indian tradition to aid us in its reconstruction.”

This is natural to man. And just in proportion as he rises in civilization does he search out every record of human life, until the back-ground of history is complete—he is not satisfied until every figure has its appropriate place and every ray of light needed to give the true effect, is thrown upon that picture. For him who thus takes in the history of the past, life is lengthened. He may count no more revolving suns, but he lives vastly longer than his fellow man, whose thoughts never wander back beyond the recollections of his boyhood. They may both of them move on together,—till the same soil,—look out upon the same hills or prairies, and rest in the same cemetery at last, and the same age may be cut upon their grave-stones—but the one who read the past, multiplied his days a hundred fold.

If you will but mark the influences he set in motion, the work he did for the race and the benefits that flow from his life, in the vast majority of cases, you shall find that this dealing with the past was not lost time—time wasted for practical life—but that it rather gave new impulse to all that was good and repaid the world in solid results.

You have not sent out for the measurement of mounds that you may some future day dig in them for hidden treasures ; nor have you sent for Indian implements that you may copy this rude work of shell and stone ; nor do you gather their traditions, hoping to discover in them wise maxims for life or new principles in science. When tried by such standards your work is useless. It cannot stand for a moment before that spirit of the age that measures all worth by dollars and cents. You appeal to another tribunal, to those who do not believe a man has done all he can do in this world when he can supply himself with food and shelter and raiment ; to those who be-

lieve that a man's life—that life which is worth the having—is found in his relations to his fellow men and to this world which God has created and through which He reveals himself to man. You would not only make the soil of Wisconsin fertile but you would throw around these lakes and hills, these streams and prairies, the charm of historic associations; that our children may see not simply so much land, beautiful and fertile indeed, but that they may recall the history of the red man, who once lived and loved where we now dwell. When the hand of man has changed the face of nature, you would have on record some description of this State as it was when the white man first entered its borders. The child shall wonder as he reads that history; the busy man of middle life shall look upon his home with keener interest as every lake and stream carries him back, in thought, to other scenes—when other men suffered and enjoyed where he now dwells. Thus do we desire to link ourselves with all that have gone before; thus you do well, do what the nature of man demands, when you prepare for coming generations the means of returning in thought to live and enjoy with us to night; and, going further back, to contrast their own happy lot with the rude and savage life of the Indian tribes.

And what, let me ask, will make their lot in such happy contrast to that of the savage tribes that so long owned the streams and lakes and hunting grounds of Wisconsin? The wants of the Indian's life were few, and these nature provided for almost without his care. He could live on the finest venison, and clothe himself in the warmest furs. He knew no statelier mansion than his own rude hut; no higher type of life than war and hunting game.

“His soul-proud science never taught to stray
Far as the solar walk or milky way.”

And what of all that? He could look upon the stars as well as we. The moon hung her silver crescent in the west for him

as well as for us. The same sun covered the plains with the beauty of spring, and at parting day hung the heavens with crimson and changed the lakes to molten gold. Could he admire all these beauties of nature; could he enjoy himself as we can? We build upon the past. We gather around us the associations of former times. We lift our eyes to the heavens, and the milky way seems blazing with the names of Thales, of Newton, of Kepler, of Herschel, of Leverrier, and hosts of others who have walked among the stars and revealed their wonders. The changing moon and golden constellations have their light reflected to us in the poetry and choicest literature of all ages. We look at the trees and flowers and we see by the aid of science the movement of every fluid, and the form and use of all the curious mechanism. We look at the hills and lakes and the history of past generations, their life passes before us in a moment. Is such a being to be compared with one that simply lives and desires nothing more? Give one day of the higher life, and we would not exchange it for a century of the other. He who enjoys all this is a civilized being. And the civilized man is the one who concentrates in his life all the higher life of past generations.

No matter what are our powers of mind, if we would advance surely and rapidly we seek for knowledge from books. We may go farther than they can guide us but we first appeal to them. And what are books? They are but the records of the past—histories all of them—records of human thought, of individual and national action. In them alone we have a sure vantage ground over the generations that have gone before us. Ignore it or deny it as we will, it is in their light we walk. Nine-tenths of all the movements in trade, art or science are made relying upon the experience of the past. When called upon to take important action, how naturally we turn to the past for guidance—as naturally as one who is to cross the mountain passes of Switzerland seeks the guidance of those who have learned by long experience where safe paths are

found and where the dangers of the cliff and the avalanche are to be avoided. And when we look in vain to the past for guidance, we go forth in doubt, with determined wills it may be, but with the expectation of meeting obstructions—of weary steps to be retraced, and perchance of failure. Blot from the world the books that are to-day our guide to action, and proclaim that for a century to come no man shall leave a record of his thoughts and his discoveries for the study of the race, and civilization would vanish as flowers and leaves fade and die when chilly winds and frosts sweep verdure from the earth at the approach of winter.

We need history to direct us in the new plans for education. It is reserved for the next generation to advance surely when they have the records of success and failures which will be sure to be witnessed the next ten years, since so many experimenters are rushing madly in opposite directions and those most experienced feel that they must tread, as best they can, new and untried paths. But although we talk of taking new paths, we have come to that period of the world when we can hardly take a single step onward without the aid of the past. You are to make new use of sciences in education—the sciences are themselves as much the product of the past as the tree, which we to-day fashion into a new machine, is the product of many years growth.

We will train the rising generation to cultivate and adorn the earth—gathering up the knowledge that has for ages accumulated, we will teach them to control the forces of nature—to harness the lightning and the steam—to make the falling water, as it hurries on to the ocean, turn the spindle and set the busy loom in motion. We will teach them to open the treasures that have been hid from the foundation of the world, in the mines, that are now buried in our mountain chains, waiting for the voice of science, with its “*sesame*,” to unlock the doors

of the treasure caves. All this we will do, but in all this work how little is our own—how much comes from the past!

But above all this, we will, by the aid of history, widen the range of human thought, we will link ourselves with the great and good of the past, and prepare for those to come the blessings of civilization and of liberty. We will not only teach them to make a living from this earth of ours, but we will try to make that living worth the having.

Gather up then every record of the past in books, in relics and in monuments—put it in the plainest, readiest form for the use of man—where it will best direct his thought and incite him to action. The ignorant may scoff, the short-sighted may cry waste of time, but you are ministering to the progress of the race. You are doing what you can to save men from the mistakes of the past—to make their lives more glorious and worthy of rational beings.

True it is, that an overweening regard for what is ancient may retard our progress. A mere miserly hoarding of old relics may be both useless and ridiculous. When we admire what is old simply because it is old, when we do a thing simply because our fathers did it, we show that we are children in judgment, content to dwell in the imperfect past instead of building upon it a more perfect present. We study the past that we may know more of man, that we may reject exploded errors and build with new materials upon tried foundations.

But the question is asked in triumphant tone, who made history? If men and nations are to walk by its light. What guided the steps of men before the muse of history had unrolled her page? Are we not independent enough to strike out new paths for ourselves as those who have gone before were compelled to do? Are we to weakly lean on those who walked in their own strength?

We answer, only by pointing to the mistakes of the world

in all the great principles of social science, and ask if you would have us tread forever the same blind, devious paths which the Ancients were compelled to tread? There may come indeed to every nation and to every representative of great progressive principles a time when no history can guide them, when a new page is to be written. The man must strike out a new path for himself, and if he is a true man he will do it boldly. But when he has come to the end of that path and success has crowned his efforts, would you have that way left as before not marked by a single finger-board, or would you have it made plain for coming generations that they may run with safety where the first explorer had slowly trod in danger? Are we content, despising the past and self-confident in our own powers, to repeat the old errors of the world, fancying we are doing something new—coming out in a new place, indeed, but “coming out on the wrong side of the century.” The world abounds with such men, men full of the elements of progress, controlled by the best impulses, but far behind the times, and thinking they are ahead of them only because they are going in the wrong direction themselves. Such men make but little impression on the world. They may fret themselves and disturb others, but they are like the foam that marks the outline, but does not make the body of the wave or give its power. The world moves on, as the force of gravitation draws bodies to the earth, with constant increments of velocity. Civilized man gathers in himself all that the past can give of guidance and impulse. And with these elements of progress, as he raises his hand to strike, he listens to catch the verdict of coming generations as they read the record of his acts. The nation that forgets the traditions of the past and has no regard for the verdict of another age will soon be with the past. To the mightiest nations, and to the leading men of the world, history speaks with warning and encouragement from her well

filled pages. She points to the pages that are yet to be filled. Men and nations hear her voice. They come to her for wisdom to direct, for communion with the hosts who have crossed the flood, the great and good, martyrs and heroes—they trust to her for honored remembrance when their work is done, and under this combined power, great men and great nations, unawed by the verdict of the passing moment move on in the accomplishment of their work with an energy heroic and sublime.

CONDITION OF THE SOCIETY.

A synopsis of the Annual Report of the Society, Jan. 4, 1867, shows : That the receipts into the general fund the past year were \$1,146 92 ; disbursements \$1,127 63 ; besides a donation of \$100 from Hon. John Catlin, for the binding fund, and its accruing interest from the investment, \$8.10.

The past and present condition of the Library are shown in the following table :

	Vols. Added.	Docs. & Pamp's.	Both Together.	Total in Lib.
1854, January 1.....	50	50	50
1855, January 2.....	1,000	1,000	2,000	2,050
1856, January 1.....	1,065	2,000	3,065	5,115
1857, January 6.....	1,005	300	1,305	6,420
1858, January 1.....	1,024	959	1,988	8,408
1859, January 4.....	1,107	500	1,607	10,010
1860, January 3.....	1,800	723	2,528	12,535
1861, January 2.....	837	1,134	1,971	14,504
1862, January 2.....	610	711	1,321	15,825
1863, January 2.....	544	2,373	2,917	18,742
1864, January 2.....	248	354	604	19,346
1865, January 3.....	520	226	746	20,092
1866, January 2.....	368	806	1,174	21,266
1867, January 3.....	928	2,811	3,734	25,000
1868, January 4.....	5,462	1,043	6,505	31,505
	<u>16,563</u>	<u>14,942</u>	<u>31,505</u>	

The largest donation the Society ever received is that of the past year from Mrs. C. L. A. TANK,—4,812 volumes, and 374 pamphlets, in the Holland, Latin, Greek and French Languages; relating to history, travels, science, theology, &c. The collection is rich in works in fine old vellum binding, published during the past three centuries. A valuable gift from the late E. B. QUINER, consisting of eleven quarto volumes of newspaper scraps of the part enacted

by Wisconsin in the late war, deserves special acknowledgement, as a valuable addition to our materials for war history.

During the past year 125 bound newspaper volumes have been secured, making 1,421 volumes in the Newspaper Department. Seventy magazines, newspapers and serials come regularly to the Society. Nineteen atlases and maps have been added during the year, making about 420 in our collection. Two portraits have been added to the Portrait Gallery, making sixty-two oil paintings altogether; and large additions have been made to the Cabinet.

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OBJECTS OF COLLECTION.—The Society earnestly solicits of every editor and publisher of a newspaper or periodical in the State the regular transmission of such publication; Books and pamphlets on all subjects of interest or reference; Magazines; Newspaper Files; Maps; Engravings; Portraits of Wisconsin pioneers and other prominent personages; War and Indian relics, and other curiosities; Narratives of Early Settlement, Hardships, Border Wars, and incidents connected with the part borne by Wisconsin men in the late war of the rebellion.

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